

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and HCPH will provide updated information as it becomes available, in addition to updated guidance.

Disease Basics

Q: What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

A: The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a new respiratory virus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Q: What is the source of COVID-19?

A: Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of the COVID-19. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats. SARS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from civet cats, while MERS, another coronavirus that emerged to infect people, came from camels. The recently emerged COVID-19 is not the same as the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) or the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: Most often, spread from person-to-person, happens among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. This virus probably originally emerged from an animal source but is now spreading from person-to-person. It's important to note that how easily a virus spreads person-to-person can vary. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Investigations regarding this virus are ongoing.

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. CDC recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Stay home when you are sick
- CDC Facemask recommendations:
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including COVID-19.
 - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019, to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in a close setting (at home or in a health care facility).

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: If you have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, call your healthcare provider immediately and describe the contact you have had.

Medical Information

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that COVID-19 can cause?

A: Complications can include lower respiratory symptoms including pneumonia. The complications can be more severe for individuals who are older, who have underlying health conditions, and a weakened immune system.

Q: Should I be tested for COVID-19?

A: If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and describe your recent travel or close contacts. If you have had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area, you should call ahead to a healthcare professional and describe your close contact and their recent travel. Your healthcare

professional will work with your state's public health department and CDC to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

Q: How do you test a person for COVID-19?

A: At this time, diagnostic testing for COVID-19 can be conducted only at CDC.

State and local health departments who have identified a person under investigation (PUI), a suspected case, should immediately notify CDC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to report the PUI and determine whether testing for COVID-19 at CDC is indicated. The EOC will assist local/state health departments to collect, store, and ship specimens appropriately to CDC, including during afterhours or on weekends/holidays.

Public Health Response and Current Situation

Q: What is CDC doing about COVID-19?

A: This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation, and CDC will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available. CDC works 24/7 to protect people's health. It is CDC's job to be concerned and move quickly whenever there is a potential public health problem.

Q: Am I at risk for COVID-19 infection in the United States?

A: Currently, according to the CDC, the risk to the American public is low. However, this is a rapidly evolving situation, and the risk assessment may change daily. The latest updates are available on CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 website.

Q: Has anyone been infected in the United States?

A: Yes. The first infection with COVID-19 in the U.S. was reported on January 21, 2020. The first confirmed instance of person-person-spread in the U.S. was reported on January 30, 2020.

Q: Am I at risk for novel coronavirus from a package or product shipping from China?

A: There is still a lot that is unknown about the newly emerged Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how it spreads. Two other coronaviruses have emerged previously to cause severe illness in people (MERS and SARS). COVID-19 is more genetically related to SARS than MERS, but both are betacoronaviruses with their origins in bats. While we don't know for sure that this virus will behave the same way as SARS and MERS, we can use the information from both of these earlier coronaviruses to guide us. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packaging shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.

Travel

Q: Should I cancel my international travel because of COVID-19?

A: The CDC has an evolving list of countries with specific travel notices and recommendations. For the most up to date list of travel restrictions and other information for travelers in regard to COVID-19, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>. For additional travel information, visit the Destination Page or Travel Health Notices on cdc.gov and locate the country you are planning travel to.

Q: How are travelers from China being screened when they enter the United States?

A: At this time, American citizens, lawful permanent residents, and family members who have been in China in the past 14 days will be allowed to enter the United States. Those travelers will be directed to one of 11 U.S. airports and will undergo a health screening and asked questions about their travel in China.

Foreign nationals, citizens from other countries, who have traveled to China in the past 14 days, are currently not being allowed into the United States.

Q: What if I recently traveled to an area affected by COVID-19 and got sick?

A: If you were in a country with a COVID-19 outbreak and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should:

- Seek medical advice - Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room.
- Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel on public transportation while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Q: Is it safe to go on a cruise?

A: Cruises put large numbers of people, often from countries around the world, in frequent and close contact with each other. This can promote the spread of respiratory viruses, such as the virus that causes COVID-19. You may get sick from close contact with an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces.

Q: What is the risk of getting COVID-19 on an airplane

A: Because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes, most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on airplanes. Although the risk of infection on an airplane is low, travelers should try to avoid contact with sick passengers and wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer that contain 60%–95% alcohol.

Q: After returning from China, when can employees return to work?

A: Currently, anyone who enters the United States after being in China during the past 14 days will have some level of restrictions on their movements.

- Travelers from Hubei Province will be quarantined and actively monitored in a location to be determined by public health authorities for up to 14 days.
- Travelers from other parts of China who do not have any symptoms are being asked to monitor their health and practice social distancing for 14 days.

Social distancing means remaining out of:

- Public places where close contact with others may occur (such as shopping centers, movie theaters, stadiums).
- Workplaces (unless the person works in an office space that allows distancing from others).
- Schools and other classroom settings.
- Local public transportation (such as on a bus, subway, taxi, ride share, plane, ship)

These restrictions are to be in effect for 14 days from the time the person was possibly exposed.

For more information: [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

Q: Should businesses recommend facemasks or other protective equipment during travel?

A: CDC does not recommend travelers wear facemasks to protect themselves from COVID-19. You may choose to wear a mask, but it is more important that you take these steps.

We recommend that everyone follow everyday prevention practices:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning product.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol.

COVID-19 and Animals

Q: What about animals or animal products imported from China?

A: At this time, CDC does not have any evidence to suggest that animals or animal products imported from China pose a risk for spreading COVID-19 in the United States.

Q: Should I be concerned about pets or other animals and COVID-19?

A: While this virus seems to have emerged from an animal source, it is now spreading from person-to-person. CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

Q: Should I avoid contact with pets or other animals if I am sick?

A: Do not handle pets or other animals while sick. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, several types of coronaviruses can cause illness in animals and spread between animals and people. Until we know more, avoid contact with animals and wear a facemask if you must be around animals or care for a pet.

Source of information: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov)